

**Senator Steuart:** Who are you going to call, God?

**Hon. M. Lorne Bonnell:** Honourable senators, I have no objection to debating the Meech Lake Accord, what happened over the weekend, or anything of an emergency nature. However, I was of the impression that the Prime Minister had said on Saturday that the Meech Lake Accord was dead because it had not been approved. If the accord is dead, I am wondering what the big rush is to have an emergency debate, unless it is to revive it, or bury it.

**Senator Barootes:** Haven't you heard of a eulogy?

**Senator Steuart:** You mean "urology."

**Senator Bonnell:** The honourable senator says that it is "urology." At any rate, perhaps the promoter of this emergency debate could inform us now what the emergency is so that we can debate the matter—

● (1410)

**Senator Frith:** That is required, by the way.

**Senator Bonnell:** —and support him. If it is a matter of reviving the Meech Lake Accord so that it can be passed again and thus achieve unity in our country, that would be wonderful. If the situation is that the government has made a mistake, and there might be a way by debating the matter here and now, that we could give the government some advice on how to get the accord reopened, then fine. However, if Meech Lake is dead, what is the emergency?

**Hon. Gerald R. Ottenheimer:** Honourable senators, as Senator Frith pointed out, the standing order under which Senator David has asked for this debate is 46(g), which I would like to identify specifically:

(g) for the adjournment of the Senate for the purposes of raising a matter of urgent public importance—

**Senator Frith:** Go on. It continues.

**Senator Ottenheimer:** Yes:

—(which the mover shall state on rising to speak before the House proceeds to the Orders of the Day.

**Senator Frith:** We have not heard the part within the brackets. We have not heard what the stated reason is.

**Senator Ottenheimer:** I do not have a transcript of what the Honourable Senator David said, but my understanding was that he indicated the reason for his request was the contemporary situation within Canada today as a result of events that transpired over the weekend. I am trying to draw a distinction. As some honourable senators have said, what is the sense of debating Meech Lake when the Prime Minister and others have said that Meech Lake is dead? We all know Meech Lake is dead. It is not Meech Lake, as I understand it, that Senator David wishes to debate. It is a matter of urgent public importance, which is the situation in Canada today, whether it is in Quebec or in any other province. Surely no one can seriously submit, no matter what one's views on any specific issue are, that we in this country are not faced with a situation of urgent public importance. Whether one was for it or against

it, Meech Lake is now dead, but surely today, in Canada, there is a situation—

**Senator Perrault:** You should have raised it last week.

**Senator Ottenheimer:** —of urgent public importance. For the Senate to rule that there is not, today, a situation of urgent public importance before the country would be to make ourselves incredible in the eyes of Canada, irrespective of one's views on any specific matter. I do submit that there certainly is a matter of urgent public importance before the country today.

**Senator Guay:** Bourassa said to leave it alone!

**Senator Frith:** Honourable senators, in view of the fact that the rules require the proposer to explain the purpose of his motion, I am not satisfied that at the present moment there is in this country a matter of urgent public importance, requiring immediate debate, within our rules. As a matter of fact, it is true, as I am sure Senator Ottenheimer and others will accept, that many of the predictions of dire consequences and matters of urgent public importance, such as the fall of the dollar, a reduction in investment and so on, have not come true.

**Senator Flynn:** If you want to say that, you can say it later.

**Senator Frith:** However, that is not the point. The point now is whether there is in this country a matter or a state of affairs that is urgent; some urgent disaster that exists at the present time that should require the Senate to adjourn immediately in order to deal with it. That is the issue before us now, not to debate the question of the pros or cons of that particular situation. We would have to say that there exists in this country what was described before Meech Lake failed as potential panic in the street, such that the Senate should adjourn in order to deal with it. That is why the rule provides, before we go any further, that the proposer of the motion explain and convince the Senate that the situation is of such urgency that we should adjourn the business of the Senate in order to deal with it.

I ask first that the proposer so explain, and then anyone else who wishes can speak on the issue, which is the preliminary issue. I then ask that we be given a chance to consider the matter for a few moments before resuming debate.

**Senator Flynn:** Enough! Be seated!

[*Translation*]

**Senator David:** Honourable senators, I feel that my colleague Senator Ottenheimer explained as well as I could the reasons for the urgency of debating the Meech Lake Accord which, I agree, has now expired. It is very hard for me to understand why you, Senator Frith, and your colleagues do not see it as urgent.

In the five years I have been in this Chamber, I do not remember a subject that should have been discussed more urgently than this one today or at the very least the Quebec senators should have an opportunity to convey to you their feelings following a development that deeply affected the six or seven million inhabitants of our province. If you do not understand that, it seems to me that you really do not understand Quebec and its people.